



JOE A. MARTINEZ  
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
DISTRICT 11

May 22, 2006

Honorable Jeb Bush  
Governor  
State of Florida  
The Capitol  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

Re: **Jail Diversion Gap Funding Pilot Project, Line Item 821A**

Dear Governor Bush:

I am writing to strongly urge you not to line-item veto the Jail Diversion Gap Funding Pilot Project funded in the amount of \$250,000 at Line 821A of the Conference Report on HB 5001, the Appropriations Act.

Currently, there is a gap of a number of months between the time an individual is released from incarceration and the time that the individual actually begins to receive government benefits, such as Social Security and Medicaid. This gap period can prove to be a critical time for mentally ill individuals who, without housing and behavioral services, are particularly susceptible to committing new crimes and returning to jail. Simply put, mentally ill individuals have a disproportionately high rate of recidivism during this gap period.

The Jail Diversion Gap Funding Pilot Project would create a pool of funds that would be used to fund housing and behavioral health services for individuals with mental illnesses who have been recently released from jail. The Pilot Project would be a one-time, non-recurring program to provide "seed" money that would become a revolving program. As benefits begin to flow in for gap government benefits, those funds would be used to replenish the pool of available funds that could, in turn, be used to fund other individuals with mental illnesses who are recently released from jail.

Due to the revolving nature of the fund, it is anticipated that 35 individuals annually would be provided with housing and the full array of behavioral health services over several months until they receive Social Security and Medicaid benefits. The Pilot Project would be documented in such a way that, if it is successful, as anticipated, it can be replicated elsewhere around the state.

Honorable Governor Jeb Bush

May 22, 2006

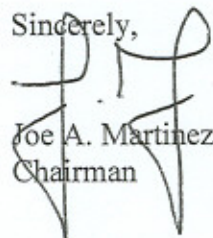
Page 2

It is anticipated that the Gap Funding Pilot Project would not only ensure successful rehabilitation and transition from jail to community for people with severe mental illnesses, but would also keep mentally ill individuals from returning to jail, thereby reducing jail costs borne by taxpayers. In sum, the Jail Diversion Gap Funding Pilot Project would be a good investment of public funds.

For these reasons, I urge you not to line item veto the Jail Diversion Gap Funding Pilot Project funded at \$250,000 at Line 821A of the Conference Report on HB 5001, the Appropriations Act.

If you have any questions about the foregoing, or if I can be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me at (305) 375-5511.

Sincerely,



Joe A. Martinez  
Chairman

JM/jim

Cc: Honorable Mayor Carlos Alvarez  
Honorable Vice Chairman Dennis C. Moss  
and Members of the Board of County Commissioners  
George Burgess, County Manager  
Murray Greenberg, County Attorney